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**LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service**

*Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)*

**Newark Educators Community Charter School**

Date: June 21, 2021 Date Revised : (TBD As Needed)

**Introduction and Background**

This document incorporates all federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. Here you will find all practices and measures that the school will be putting in place to ensure a safe and healthy environment as we get ready to return to full time in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. This plan may require further revisions as more information becomes available.

**Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy** [**announced**](https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210517a.shtml) **that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.**

The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

**1. Maintaining Health and Safety**

Each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H) describes how NECCS will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan has been developed to be consistent with the requirements in the NJDOE Guidance. NECCS takes into consideration the school’s local needs, in order to ensure the school reopens safely and it is prepared to accommodate students' unique needs during this unprecedented time.

**A. Universal and correct wearing of masks:**

The safety and health of staff and students is the top priority at NECCS, and although most staff have been vaccinated we do understand that as of now there is no vaccine available for children under the age of 12. NECCS will maintain the health and safety of our students, educators and other staff by ensuring that State guidelines continue to be implemented, and the Administration will continue to monitor to ensure that all adults entering NECCS will be wearing face masks appropriately. For these reasons NECCS has implemented the following practices regarding masks:

* + All staff and students will wear face-coverings / masks while in the building.
	+ Face coverings are only to be removed during meal times and when able to socially distance and in outdoor spaces.
	+ Additional masks will be provided for every room in the event that a mask needs to be replaced.
	+ Staff will be provided with the option of wearing face shields as an additional layer of protection.
	+ Students will be provided with the additional option of face shields, particularly for those learners showing difficulty with wearing masks or keeping them properly in place. This is in addition to the mask and not in place of wearing a mask.

These practices will be enforced for 2021-2022 until new guidance is issued by the NJ Department of Health.

To ensure successful implementation of the appropriate use of masks, teachers will conduct periodic mask checks and provide reminders to ensure all scholars have their masks on correctly over the nose and below the chin. Additional masks will also be available in the Nurse's office.

**B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)**

In order to provide a safe environment throughout the school, the following practices will continue to be in place for the 2021-2022 school year, at least until additional guidelines are issued by the proper authorities.

* Student desks will be outfitted with clear dividers to provide an additional layer of protection when greater distance is not possible in classrooms.
* Students will be kept in cohorts throughout the instructional day based on their homeroom assignments.
* Outdoor spaces will be divided into sections for PE and recess to ensure students only interact with their cohorts/homeroom peers.
* Lunch will be served in the cafeteria for grades 1 -4 as long as it is possible to maintain the integrity of cohorts. In the event that it becomes necessary, lunch will be served in the classrooms. Lunch for PreK and Kindergarten will be served in classrooms.
* Students and staff must remain socially-distanced to the greatest extent possible.
* Students and staff will be required to wear a mask in the classrooms.
* Visitors will be allowed on a limited basis, and must check in using the symptom checklist at the front office. Visitors will also be required to wear a mask.
* Signage will continue to be posted as reminders to maintain social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
* Respectful isolation of anyone who is symptomatic or has a temperature of 100.4℉ (99 for student 5 and under) or higher. Standing orders from the School Physician states that students with temperatures of 100.4℉ (99 for students 5 and under) or higher will be sent home.

**C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette will be observed throughout the school day with the following practices:

* Use of hand sanitizer or hand washing for 20 seconds is required. Students in PreK and Kindergarten will require supervision. Handwashing stations have been placed in PreK and Kindergarten classrooms in the form of portable sinks so that students can wash their hands as needed without having to transition to the restrooms.
* All classrooms and offices will be provided with EPA approved wipes and hand sanitizers to ensure students sanitize their hands throughout the day, particularly as they transition to different activities and use any shared items in the classroom, such as sharpeners, pens, and library books. Hand sanitizer will be made available at each entrance, and will also be placed outside or restrooms and water coolers. EPA approved disposable wipes will be available to all staff to clean commonly used surfaces such as keyboards, desks before and after use.
* Along with the items listed above, all rooms will be provided with facial tissues should anyone need them. Sanitizing of hands after the use of tissues will be strictly enforced.
* Masks will be required as explained in item A.

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**

* Students, staff and visitors who enter the building will be required to sanitize their shoes as part of the temperature check process. All guidelines from the CDC will be strictly adhered to.
* Maintaining a clean facility has been a steady practice at NECCS. Now that we prepare to receive a larger number of people in the building we will increase the level of cleanliness and sanitation observed thus far. Deep cleaning will take place daily starting in September 2021. In order to ensure this takes place at the highest levels of cleanliness, additional janitorial services will be secured to provide full cleaning and sanitation services in the afternoon / evening each day.
* Ventilation of every room in the building will be closely monitored by the maintenance staff. For classrooms where more than 20 students are housed we will
	+ Upgrade and purchase higher efficiency filters or the highest-rated filter that our system fan and filter slot can accommodate.
	+ Increase the number of inspections to HVAC units & Compressors quarterly.
	+ Prepare and post an HVAC calendar to ensure timely purchase and replacement of filters on a regular basis, as per the manufacturer’s recommendation.
	+ Purchase a cloud-based inventory and maintenance system that has an audit trail and can provide documentation and regular reports on the maintenance of the HVAC SYSTEM
	+ Complete all repairs and upgrades to the ventilation system on the 2nd, second and 3rd - third floors.
	+ Provide ongoing, quarterly inspections of the ventilation system, and plan for and carry out any necessary adjustments, repairs, replacement, or upgrades.

**E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments**

To maintain the safety of students and staff, the School Nurse will observe student arrival to ensure no COVID- like symptoms are visible. If a child may be experiencing COVID-like symptoms, the school will commence proper protocols.

* Following the school nurse’s assessment of the symptoms, if she deems necessary, she will seek approval from the administration and the child will be sent home.
* During the course of the day, if any teacher identifies a child exhibiting COVID-like symptoms, she/he will immediately escort the child to the nurse who will follow the appropriate protocol.

In addition to the school nurse monitoring arrival for visual inspection of students’ overall health, parents will be asked to complete a symptom-check form for each child prior to entering the building via digital form.

* The administration and other staff members will continue to hold all parents responsible for submitting the digital form.
* Any child who has not submitted a digital form will receive a manual check upon entry to the school building.
* The School Nurse will review check-in data daily and immediately notify administration and families with any concerns identified.
* Upon confirmation of a COVID diagnosis, the district will work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient is isolated.
* Quarantine: Contacts will be required to stay home and maintain social distance from others (at least 3 feet) until 7-10 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.
* CDC cleaning protocols will be implemented. Any quarantine or school closure will be determined in concert with the County Department of Health.
* The district will maintain logs in each building of contacts, dates of exposure, quarantine dates.

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

All staff, students, and visitors entering the building will be required to have a temperature check and complete a daily health-check form.

All NECCS staff who work on-site have been asked to provide a negative COVID-19 test result from a sample that is no more than 72 hours old throughout the year. This requirement is also in place for anyone who has traveled, tested positive, or anyone with symptoms listed in the CDC guidance.

Testing on-site has been made available in the past to both staff and families, and will continue to be available going forward on a regular basis. The first testing event will be scheduled for the beginning of school. Additional testing events will be planned throughout the year as needed, particularly after extended breaks such as WInter and Spring Breaks.

**G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible**

NECCS has made every effort to share information with staff and families since the vaccination effort began. This effort has included the sharing of information regarding vaccination sites throughout the state on a consistent basis via email and Class Dojo. Staff and families have been provided multiple times with Vaccination Centers details when the information has been made available to the school by the County Office or the school district.

**H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies.**

Children with disabilities are held to the same expectations with respect to health and safety, as their same aged peers. Those expectations will be accompanied by appropriate accommodations to ensure that those children have adequate access to safety while getting the support they require. Children with disabilities are expected to wear masks, sanitize, and socially distance. However, they may require support with mask wearing and hand washing, and certain interventions to accommodate their disabilities may require close contact. The paraprofessionals who will be in close contact with those children will be expected to adhere to the same practices described in this plan to ensure that students are supported in a safe manner.

**2. Ensuring Continuity of Services**

To ensure continuity of services regarding meeting student academic needs, NECCS will provide instructional materials for both students and parents, with detailed information as to their use. This is to ensure that any gaps in learning are addressed in a differentiated manner. All curriculum will be reviewed and revised over the summer in order to accommodate for any unfinished learning that took place during the school closure.

In regard to social, emotional and mental health needs, all students and families will be screened for the need for services within the first six weeks of school, by the school social worker. Referrals will be made when a higher level of care is deemed necessary. Teachers will continue to check in with their students and refer to the school social worker as necessary. Parents are able to enroll their children in counseling at any time during the year. The school social worker will provide ongoing support by way of individual and group counseling to address grief, loss, transitions, and fears about the return to in-person learning.

**3. Public Comment**

**A. Seeking Public Comment from Public:**

NECCS provided access to the public of the plan in electronic form by posting it on the school website. Availability of the plan was announced via Class Dojo and All-Call. Along with the plan, a Google Form was posted asking parents to provide feedback and giving them an opportunity to ask questions that the plan may not have answered explicitly.

**B. Access to Plan Information:**

The plan was shared in a simplified form, where processes were clearly outlined in language that was understandable and accessible to our population. SInce we have a small population of Spanish speaking families, the plan was also made available in Spanish.